PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (USA)
OFFICE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Greetings: 2 very good friends -
both make me glad I'm a Presbyterian
Doug Oldenburg - a Presbyterian Classic -
Walter — Pastor - Preacher - Scholar -
Joanna Adams - best preacher I know
I'm a baseball fan - now a Cubs fan! (yes ham Maddux does seem
to me that Joanna always gets me down - at Play off time
last time arranged - might Braves won pennant -
- here we go again -

News. Cubs bought my consortium of Philippine Businesses - renewed - "Manila Folders"

Story - House painter to minister: confession + for a long time I've been cheating + water-down paint: now it's starting to show - I'm embarrassed + guilty - "What to do?" "Repaint + thin no more"

(Computer - lots + hours)

GA - Report - alive, well, lively, .. vigorous..
If all you read was parachurch press.. Mod. sees whole pic ..
congregations - Presbyteries + Networks - Marines, Youth, Rac - Ethnics ..
tell - H. Browne hearing impaired - singing anthem - when else?
Big - old - missions - once a year Assembly -
like family reunion - diversity - conflict -

Charles Finney. Lectures on Revivals of Religion 1835
→ "These things in the P.C., their contentions + janglings are so ridiculous, so wicked, so outrageous, that no doubt there is a jubilee in hell every year about the time of the meeting of the G.A."

COCU, Lay Pastors, Nat. Amer., + Sex:
the issue - can we hold?

tell ~~Crossstorm~~ HRA

Part of what P.C. means/meant - educated ministry: "faith seeking understanding": openness to critical thinking - very important + not just training in doctrine - but a place to reflect + ask + seek..

Our Seminaries - part of our assets - + hope..

Read - GA action 1810 - Updike - Roger's Version

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PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (USA)
OFFICE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

GA - authorization to found a Seminary 1810

"Filling the church with a learned and able ministry without a corresponding portion of real piety would be a curse to the world + an offense to God + the people, so the GA think it their duty to state that in establishing a Seminary for training up ministers .. it will be their endeavor to make it a "nursery of vital piety" as well as of sound theological learning, and to train up persons who will be lovers as well as defenders of the truth as it is in Jesus"

J. Updike - Rogers' Version (He was wrong here)

Believing souls are stocked in like weedy, fragrant cabbages from the rural hinterland and in three years of fine distinctions + exegetical quibbling we have chopped them into cole slaw saleable at any suburban supermarket. We take in seed out ministers, workers in a vineyard of incurable anxiety + discontent.

] Practical theology never has existed + does not exist. The closest it ever came was a gleam in Schleiermacher's eye.

LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY 40202-1396 502-569-5360

Value
or Money Matters

Mark 10:17-27
Luke 12:22-34
1 Timothy 6:6-19
7-10
17-19

[redacted]

FOURTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, CHICAGO
JOHN M. BUCHANAN, PASTOR

Money + Meaning

THERE IS A WONDERFUL TELEVISION COMMERCIAL THAT MAKES ME LAUGH EVERY TIME I SEE IT. | THE LATE JACK BENNY IS BEING MUGGED. | BENNY, A GREAT COMEDIAN OF A GENERATION AGO, WAS KNOWN FOR HIS LEGENDARY TIGHT-FISTEDNESS. | SOME OF US CAN REMEMBER SITTING BY THE RADIO ON SUNDAY EVENING AND LAUGHING AS BENNY USED, OVER AND OVER, THE RUNNING GAG OF HIS UNWILLINGNESS TO PART WITH A PENNY ... THE CREAKING DOORS ON HIS MONEY VAULT, | HIS EMBARRASSING, RELUCTANT FUMBLING WITH HIS CHANGE PURSE TO DIG

OUT A NICKEL. IN THE CURRENT TELEVISION VERSION, IT'S A RAINY NIGHT, A MUGGER ACCOSTS BENNY AND SAYS, "YOUR MONEY OR YOUR LIFE." THERE IS AN UNEXPECTED, PREGNANT PAUSE. "I SAID, YOUR MONEY OR YOUR LIFE," THE IMPATIENT MUGGER BARKS. BENNY REPLIES: "I'M THINKING IT OVER".

THERE IS TRUTH AS WELL AS HUMOR IN THAT. THERE IS ALSO CONSIDERABLE DISCOMFORT.

Money talk Makes us uncomfortable

JIMMY DEAN USED TO TELL THE WONDERFUL STORY OF THE TENNESSEE MOUNTAIN CHURCH WHOSE MOST VOCAL MEMBER WAS AN ELDERLY WOMAN WHO WAS IN EVERY WAY A SAINT -- EXCEPT FOR THE FACT THAT

SHE ENJOYED USING A LITTLE SNUFF, A TOBACCO PRODUCT, ON OCCASION. ON A SUNDAY MORNING A VISITING PREACHER WAS RAILING AGAINST THE SINS OF THE FLESH, AND THE WOMAN WAS RESPONDING WITH HER NORMAL VIGOR. HE TURNED TO THE EVIL OF DRINK, AND SHE BECAME EVEN MORE SPIRITED IN HER "AMENS" AND "PREACH-IT-BROTHER'S". AND THEN HE TOOK UP THE TOPIC OF TOBACCO AND THE NASTY HABIT SOME HAVE OF USING SNUFF. THE OLD WOMAN SAID, LOUD ENOUGH FOR ALL TO HEAR, "HE JUST STOPPED PREACHIN' AND WENT TO MEDDLIN."

MONEY TALK IS PERSONAL. MEDDLING. THERE WAS A LEGENDARY INCIDENT ONCE

to P 6

IN THE COUNTRY." ROCKEFELLER RESPONDED, "DO YOU THINK THAT MORE PEOPLE WILL CRITICIZE YOU ON ACCOUNT OF MY WEALTH, THAN WILL CRITICIZE ME ON ACCOUNT OF YOUR THEOLOGY?" [ROBERT MOATS MILLER, HARRY EMERSON FOSDICK, PREACHER, PASTOR, PROPHET, P. 161-162]

I GREW UP IN A HOUSEHOLD WHERE THERE WAS NO PUBLIC TALK ABOUT TWO SUBJECTS: SEX AND HOW MUCH MONEY PEOPLE MADE, ALTHOUGH THE TOPIC WAS AN EVER-PRESENT REALITY, LURKING ALWAYS JUST UNDER THE SURFACE. THE GENERATION OF PEOPLE WHO GREW UP IN THE DEPRESSION NEVER STOPPED WORRYING ABOUT HAVING ENOUGH MONEY, BUT WHAT WE HAD AND WHAT

We are shaped by history - our personal history & the history of the culture in which we were born..

Updike's new book 4 generations -

What shaped our - do we inherit - what events - purchases

I'm a saw - like Bombeck

~~told about~~ ~~Chap 63~~

to II

~~use~~ ~~Annie~~ Dillard

her

THEY HAD WAS NOBODY'S BUSINESS BUT OURS AND THEIRS. SOCIAL COMMENTATORS NOTE THAT MONEY IS THE LAST BASTION OF PRIVACY IN AMERICA: THAT AMERICANS WILL REVEAL EVERYTHING ABOUT THEMSELVES, INCLUDING THEIR SEXUAL BEHAVIOR, BEFORE THEY WILL TALK ABOUT HOW MUCH MONEY THEY HAVE. PHILOSOPHY PROFESSOR JACOB NEEDLEMAN ~~WRITES,~~ observes ..

asked by a reporter - or Talk Show Host

San Francisco

> "TIME WAS IN OUR SOCIETY, WHEN IT WAS THE CLERGYMAN, THE PHYSICIAN, THE PSYCHIATRIST WHO WAS MOST PRIVY TO PEOPLE SECRET LIVES, THEIR

FEARS, DESIRES, ANXIETIES, THEIR SHAMES AND MISDEEDS. BUT NOW THIS ROLE IS OCCUPIED MORE BY THE ACCOUNTANT AND TAX PREPARER." [MONEY AND THE MEANING OF LIFE, P.104]

MONEY TALK IS PERSONAL. IT IS ALSO ABOUT MORE THAN MONEY. IT IS ABOUT HEART AND SOUL. IT IS ABOUT HOW WE SEE OURSELVES AND THE PURPOSE OF OUR LIVES. IT IS ABOUT, ABOVE ALL ELSE, VALUES AND PRIORITIES. MONEY, IN FACT, HOW WE THINK ABOUT IT, ACQUIRE, AND USE IT, IS

VERY CLOSE TO THE ESSENCE OF WHO WE ARE. ONE COULD ARGUE THAT TO AVOID THE TOPIC FOR WHATEVER REASON IS NOT THEOLOGICALLY AND SPIRITUALLY RESPONSIBLE.

JESUS CERTAINLY DIDN'T. SOMEONE HAS CALCULATED THAT HE HAD MORE TO SAY ABOUT MONEY THAN HE DID ABOUT EITHER SIN OR HEAVEN.

ONE TIME HE TOLD A YOUNG MAN THAT HIS SALVATION DEPENDED ON HIS GIVING AWAY ALL HIS WEALTH, ADDING THE EDITORIAL COMMENT THAT IT WILL BE EASIER FOR A CAMEL TO GET THROUGH THE EYE OF A NEEDLE THAN FOR A RICH MAN TO ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU BUT THAT MAKES ME VERY UNCOMFORTABLE. I MAY NOT BE A BIG CAMEL, BUT I'VE ACCUMULATED A LITTLE LOAD OVER THE YEARS: MY STUFF AS GEORGE CARLIN, THE COMEDIAN CALLS IT... ALL THE STUFF I LOVE AND MOVE WITH ME. BOOKS, CDS, A FEW PICTURES, SOME SILVER AND CRYSTAL FROM OUR FAMILIES, A LITTLE BANK ACCOUNT. I GET NERVOUS WHEN JESUS TELLS THE YOUNG MAN TO UNLOAD IT IF HE WANTS TO GET IN THE KINGDOM.

THERE HAVE BEEN SOME VERY IMAGINATIVE ATTEMPTS TO GET US OUT FROM UNDER THAT ONE. IN FACT, THE TEXTUAL SCHOLARS WHO SPEND THEIR TIME EXAMINING ANCIENT MANUSCRIPTS UNDER A MICROSCOPE

SAY THAT THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT THIS TEXT HAS BEEN TAMPERED WITH REPEATEDLY. WE AREN'T THE FIRST ONES, APPARENTLY, TO WISH HE DIDN'T SAY IT OR MEAN IT.

LATER SCHOLARS WOULD TRY TO HELP BY POINTING OUT THAT THE GREEK WORD FOR ROPE IS QUITE SIMILAR TO THE WORD FOR CAMEL AND THAT WHAT JESUS PROBABLY SAID WAS THAT IT IS EASIER FOR A ROPE, A PIECE OF TWINE, TO GO THROUGH THE EYE OF A NEEDLE. AT LEAST THE IMAGE IS CONSISTENT. THE TASK IS DIFFICULT, BUT, IN A SENSE, DOABLE.

THE MOST IMAGINATIVE EFFORT IS THE SUGGESTION THAT ANCIENT CITY WALLS HAD

SMALL OPENINGS THROUGH WHICH LATE ARRIVERS MIGHT SAFELY ENTER THE CITY - WITHOUT THE DANGER OF OPENING THE GATES. THIS OPENING, THEY CONTEND, WAS CALLED THE "EYE OF THE NEEDLE." A CAMEL COULD GET THROUGH - ON HIS KNEES, WITH HIS OWNER PUSHING AND PULLING. IT'S A WONDERFUL IMAGE. PREACHERS ON STEWARDSHIP SUNDAY HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO SUGGEST THAT LOADED CAMELS, PARTICULARLY, ARE GOING TO HAVE DIFFICULTY, AND THAT THE WAY TO SQUEEZE IN IS TO UNLOAD SOME OF THE GOODS - AS IN A PLEDGE TO THE CHURCH. IT IS AN APPROACH TO FUND RAISING NOT TO BE TAKEN LIGHTLY. SCHOLARS TRACE THIS INTERPRETATION TO THE NINTH CENTURY AND

although our Jewish guide Helen told it is as if it were true.

SADLY CONCLUDE THAT THE WHOLE MATTER IS SPURIOUS.

WHAT WE REALLY MUST DO IS GO BACK AND LOOK AGAIN AT THIS INTERESTING, WEALTHY YOUNG MAN. | WHAT ACTUALLY WAS WRONG WITH HIM? | HE'S NOT BAD. | IN FACT, HE'S GOOD, ADMIRABLE, UPRIGHT, GENEROUS AND HE IS THEOLOGICALLY SENSITIVE. | HE'S GOT COURAGE AND CHARACTER. | WHAT'S WRONG HERE? | WHAT ABOUT HIM CAUSES HIM TO MISS THE GRACE AND LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST? | HE IS, BY THE WAY, THE ONLY PERSON IN THE GOSPEL OF MARK, WHO JESUS CALLS AND WHO DOES NOT RESPOND BY FOLLOWING. | HE CAN'T. | HE'S NOT FREE TO. | THAT'S WHAT IS WRONG. | HE'S IMPRISONED, I THINK, BY

HIS POSSESSIONS. HE'S EVEN SORRY ABOUT IT. THERE'S A SENSE IN WHICH HE KNOWS WHAT'S WRONG. IN POINT OF FACT, WHAT JESUS TEACHES HIM IS THAT HE DOESN'T OWN A THING ACTUALLY. HE'S OWNED BY HIS POSSESSIONS, IN SERVICE TO THEM, DEPENDENT ON THEM FOR HAPPINESS, SECURITY AND JOY.

IT IS NOT APPROPRIATE TO RESOLVE THE TENSION IN THIS TEXT TOO QUICKLY OR EASILY. I BELIEVE IT WAS MEANT TO MAKE US UNCOMFORTABLE AND REFLECTIVE. BUT IT IS FAIR TO OBSERVE THAT JESUS DID NOT SAY GO -- SELL -- GIVE, TO EVERY WEALTHY PERSON HE ENCOUNTERED. HE HAD WEALTHY FRIENDS: NICODEMUS, ZACHEUS, JOSEPH OF

ARIMATHEA. HE DIDN'T TELL THEM TO SELL IT ALL. WHAT HE SAID TO THIS YOUNG MAN WAS HIS PERSONAL PRESCRIPTION FOR SALVATION.

to 17

ANOTHER TIME JESUS IS SPEAKING ABOUT LIVING LIFE IN HARMONY WITH GOD'S GRACE AND HE SAYS SOME VERY INTERESTING THINGS --

"DON'T WORRY -- LIFE IS MORE THAN FOOD, CLOTHING"... HE TELLS HIS FRIENDS. "GOD WILL PROVIDE WHAT YOU NEED TO LIVE FULLY. MAYBE NOT WHAT YOU WANT, OR THINK YOU WANT, BUT WHAT YOU NEED. STOP STRIVING SO INTENSELY FOR SECURITY --

Ironically - you don't own what you can't give away (or use fully)
Annie Dillard
The Writing Life
The 1963 Chevy. Plastic seat covers.

another time he said
.. where your treasure is, then your heart will be.

to - 17 →

JESUS SAID THE REALITY IS EXACTLY THE OPPOSITE. "WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS, THERE YOUR HEART WILL BE ALSO," WHICH IS TO SUGGEST, AT LEAST, THAT OUR COMMITMENTS OF THE HEART FOLLOW OUR BEHAVIOR, OR, THE TRUEST AND DEEPEST AFFECTION OF OUR HEARTS ARE REVEALED, NOT BY OUR WORDS AND AFFIRMATIONS AND INTENTIONS, BUT BY WHAT WE DO WITH OUR MONEY.

OUR PERSONAL CREED, SOMEONE OBSERVED, IS NOT SO MUCH THE WORDS WE RECITE IN CHURCH, AS IT IS THE STUBS IN OUR CHECKBOOK. THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT JESUS SAID. YOUR MONEY, HOW YOU GET IT, HOW YOU USE IT, WHAT IT DOES FOR YOU,

Would you like to apply the observation to our culture - how we are deciding to spend our public resources? Education is ill - we can't seem to solve it

is — in a sense.
the real you.

To P22

JACOB NEEDLEMAN TEACHES PHILOSOPHY AT SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY AND HAS WRITTEN A BOOK, MONEY AND THE MEANING OF LIFE. NEEDLEMAN MAKES THE POINT THAT MONEY IS SO IMPORTANT IN OUR CULTURE THAT WE REALLY SHOULD BE THINKING AND TALKING MORE ABOUT IT, NOT LESS.

"IN NO OTHER CULTURE OR CIVILIZATION THAT WE KNOW OF HAS MONEY BEEN SUCH A PERVASIVE AND DECISIVE INFLUENCE. IN THE WORLD WE NOW LIVE IN, MONEY ENTERS INTO EVERYTHING HUMAN BEINGS DO, INTO EVERY ASPECT AND POCKET

In his memoir, Days of Grace, the late Arthur Ashe wrote candidly about money and value.

"Money makes me happy ... I long ago decided on the whole. I much prefer having money to not having it. In that sense it makes me happy. On the other hand, I also learned a long time ago what money can and cannot do for me. From what we get, we can make a living; what we give, however, makes a life."

[p.176]

IT IS PERSONAL, FOR YOU AND FOR ME.

IN STEPHEN COVEY'S BEST-SELLER, THE SEVEN HABITS OF HIGHLY-EFFECTIVE PEOPLE, HE URGES HIS READERS TO DO A PERSONAL ACCOUNTING, OF HOW WE ARE SPENDING OUR RESOURCES. HE SUGGESTS THAT WE WRITE A PERSONAL MISSION STATEMENT AND IDENTIFY WHAT IS AT THE CENTER OF OUR LIVES -- OUR CAREER, PROFESSIONAL SUCCESS, FAMILY, INFLUENCE, MONEY.

(Y)

"IF MY SENSE OF PERSONAL WORTH COMES FROM MY NET WORTH," HE CONFESSES, "I AM VULNERABLE TO ANYTHING THAT WILL AFFECT THAT NET WORTH."

BB Taylor
You cannot accept God's gift if you have no spare hand to take it with
You cannot make room for it if your rooms are already full.
You cannot follow if you are not free to go.

AND, WE WILL BEGIN TO MAKE BAD, PERHAPS TRAGIC DECISIONS, ABOUT HOW TO SPEND OUR RESOURCES: OUR TIME, OUR ENERGY, OUR MONEY, OUR LOVE.

WE'LL MISS THE CHILD'S BIRTHDAY PARTY BECAUSE OF A GOLF GAME WITH CLIENTS, OR THE CONCERT BECAUSE OF A MEETING AT THE OFFICE. WE'LL SUBSTITUTE WORK FOR A VACATION WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS. WE'LL NOT GO SEE SICK AND AGING PARENTS BECAUSE OF RESPONSIBILITIES WHICH WE THINK ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN ANYTHING ELSE. WE'LL SLEEP AND EAT LESS, AND NOT WISELY, STAY AT WORK TOO MUCH AND TOO LATE.

THAT'S THE TEMPTATION ST. PAUL WAS TALKING ABOUT, THE BUSY, STRESSED OUT, EXHAUSTED, DRIVEN PROFESSIONAL (AND WHO AMONG US DOESN'T RECOGNIZE THEMSELVES PERSONALLY) EXPERIENCING THE TRUTH OF SCRIPTURE ON THE SUBJECT OF MONEY.

YOU AND I HAVE ONE LIFE TO LIVE. IT IS A FINITE RESOURCE. IT IS MADE UP OF OUR TIME -- MINUTES AND HOURS AND WEEKS AND MONTHS AND YEARS. IT IS MADE UP OF OUR ENERGY, OUR INTELLIGENCE AND OUR LOVE. AND OUR MONEY.

What will you do with your reprieve?

GOD'S INTENT IS FOR THAT LIFE TO BE LIVED FULLY. GOD WANTS US, IN ST. PAUL'S MEMORABLE LANGUAGE, TO TAKE HOLD

OF THE LIFE THAT IS REALLY LIFE," BY RESPONSIBLY USING, SPENDING, PUTTING TO WORK EVERYTHING WE HAVE, EVERYTHING WE ARE.

MONEY. IT IS VERY PERSONAL -- FOR WHERE YOUR TREASURE, IS, THERE YOUR HEART, YOUR SOUL, YOUR LIFE ITSELF, WILL BE ALSO.

"YOUR MONEY OR YOUR LIFE." THINK IT OVER. AMEN.

The Fourth Church Pulpit

SERVANTS AND STEWARDS

May 19, 1996

John M. Buchanan

The original message, the essential truth, of every religion is the sacred Mystery, the presence in this world of a hidden Wisdom, which cannot be expressed in words, which cannot be known in sense or reason, but is hidden in the heart — the Ground of Center or Substance of the Soul, of which the mystics speak — and reveals itself to those who seek it in the silence beyond word and thought.

Bede Griffiths
Return to the Centre

FOURTH
PRESBY
TERIAN
CHURCH

A LIGHT IN THE CITY

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Scripture
John 17:1-11
1 Corinthians 3:18-4:5

"Think of us ... as servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries."
1 Corinthians 4:1 (NRSV)

A friend of mine, Eugenia Gamble, tells a story about learning an important lesson recently. Eugenia is a very popular speaker, much in demand these days, and spends a lot of time in airplanes and airports. She lives in Birmingham, Alabama, and after a recent speaking engagement in southern California, she and her husband stayed on for a glorious few days of blissful freedom. It was wonderful, restful, restorative. When they went to the airport for their return flight the ticket agent asked if they'd mind moving up to first class. They didn't mind at all. Shortly before takeoff, enjoying their spacious comfortable first class seats, they were served the best, biggest chocolate chip cookies in the world and it seemed, she said, sitting there in first class, eating a delicious cookie, holding hands with her husband, to whom she said she was still glad to be married, even after five full days together, it seemed that God was in heaven, smiling on her and all was right in her world.

After takeoff the plane, which was climbing steadily through 20,000 feet, suddenly leveled off and seemed to start a sharp descent. The captain came on the intercom and announced that there was no reason to be concerned, but there seemed to be a minor engine problem and they were going to descend a few thousand feet and check it out. Unsettling. The descent continued. Eugenia ate her second chocolate chip cookie. The pilot came on the intercom again. In fact, there was an engine problem and they were turning back to Los Angles. No reason to be concerned.

The descent continued. The captain's voice came over the intercom. In fact, the nature of the engine problem was such that it was appropriate now to find a place to land as soon as possible. No reason to be alarmed. Eugenia ate her husband's chocolate chip cookie, now entertaining visions of an emergency landing on an interstate, or somewhere in the desert or, of course, a much worse scenario.

Fortuitously the pilot found Las Vegas, landed safely, where they spent the night in a cheap motel outside of town. The next day, a nightmarish sequence of weather and mechanical complications landed them in Florida, not Birmingham, in the middle of a tornado, with very bumpy flying.

When, two days later, Eugenia was finally safely at home, she became really frightened, realizing that she had been very fortunate. Looking at herself in the mirror the first thing that morning she says she heard an inner voice and it said, "All right, Eugenia, you got a reprieve. Now what are you going to do with the rest of your life?"

There's no more important question than that. And sometimes it takes a near miss, or some experience of life's vulnerability, fragility, or just plain temporality, its agonizing brevity, to raise the issue. Successful surgery, a positive result in the lab, a harrowing flight ... a reprieve ... now what?

It is a question of management, of establishing priorities. We have this resource, our own lives: our bodies, our minds, our imaginations, our dreams and hopes, and time. Maybe a lot of time, maybe not so much, but we do have it and it is in our hands — to use, to spend, invest, or simply to observe it diminishing, dribbling away, slowly. Sometimes it takes a close call to raise the issue, but the most important question for each of us, each morning as we look in the mirror and start the day is, "what are you going to do with it, the rest of it, however much is left. You're the CEO of this project. The management is up to you."

E. B. White said somewhere — and for the life of me I can't find where (so if you know, please do let me know as well so I can say this a little more confidently) — that the good thing about having a religion is that you have something to do when you get up in the morning.

Christians have not always thought this way. Typically Christianity, from the middle ages right up to the 1990s, has defined the vocation of a Christian to be the sanctification of the individual in preparation for spending eternity in heaven. Professor Hall, in his most recent work, *Professing the Faith*, identifies and laments the fact that Protestant theology insists on "reducing" the message of Christianity to salvation of the soul after death, or more recently, and more fashionably, the happiness, contentment, self-fulfillment, self-actualization, self-expression of the soul in the present. Protestant theology has either sanctified or psychologized the gospel, when the truth of the matter is that the message has to do with being responsible for the world, beginning with your own life.

It's a matter of life and death, Hall thinks. The life of the world just may depend on faithful people bearing witness, doing the works of compassion, protecting life. Individually, it's a matter of deciding to live faithfully, to contend for the forces of life, beauty, goodness and truth, says Hall, or capitulating to the forces of death, retreating to physical or spiritual enclaves, safely insulated from everything in the world that denies life, goodness and beauty.

There's a lot of that going on in the world these days. We live in a very violent culture. The power of death is not a metaphor, a harmless theological concept. The power of death is whatever denies life and beauty and goodness. It is a teenager with a handgun. It is extensive, carefully organized gangs, based on and financed by the free market principles of supply and demand, supported by our continuing collaboration with that market by assuring scarcity and therefore the highest street value of the product of choice — crack cocaine. The power of death is a system that arranges all that, and then crowds as many poor and unemployed people as it can into high rise buildings, takes away all the incentives it can think of for encouraging families to stay together, slowly withdraws public support for life's necessities and then happily provides access to military style weapons, armor piercing bullets, called "cop killers," and when the subject is finally addressed by public officials, like last week by the President, it is in the form of proposals not to deal with the problem at all, but to get tougher and build more jails. That system is what the power of death looks like in America, in Chicago, in 1996.

And Christians, Douglas John Hall suggests, cannot and must not follow the culture in retreating from the harsh, almost unspeakable reality of that. But in the name of Jesus Christ, not anybody's political or social agenda, in the name of responsible stewardship, Christians must continue, with dogged persistence, to ask hard questions, tell hard truths, and be willing as necessary to act responsibly.

It doesn't' seem like very much in the context of an enormous reality like urban poverty and violence, but the Church of Jesus Christ sometimes keeps trying, sometimes long after everyone else has capitulated. It is what this church tries to do with its educational outreach programs, tutoring, the Center for Whole Life at Cabrini-Green.

Corporately as servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysterious presence and, individually, my sense is that you and I need the word of responsibility, the stewardship word, as much and as deeply as we need anything.

My conclusion after doing this job for three decades is that people turn to religion for two reasons: to figure out who they are and to decide what to do.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ tells us that we are, first, children of God, loved by God as strongly as a mother loves her nursing infant, loved by God beyond our ability to imagine or comprehend, loved with an everlasting, unconditional love.

That is who we are. God's beloveds. And the Gospel of Jesus Christ tells us that precisely because we are loved, God has work for us to do, expects us to be responsible managers, depends on us to live out our lives, spend the precious resource of our lives — to God's glory and for the world's care.

Servants and stewards. Do you know Oseola McCarty? She was in the news last summer actually. Eighty-seven years old, she has lived in Hattiesburg, Mississippi all her life, quit school in sixth grade, took in dirty clothes, washed, ironed and repaired every day, all her life. She never travelled much, took one trip to Niagara Falls, never spent money on herself, faithfully attended the Friendship Baptist Church, put every dollar and all the change she made in the bank. And last summer, after discovering that she had $150,000, gave it all — every penny to the University of Southern Mississippi for scholarships for black students. "I never minded work, but I was always so busy, busy. Maybe I can make it so the children don't have to work like I did." [*New York Times*, 8/10/95]

The Fourth Church Pulpit

MONEY AND MEANING

October 22, 1995

John M. Buchanan

Stewardship must be understood first as descriptive of the being — the very life — of God's people. Instead of periodic efforts at conjuring up deeds of stewardship; instead of financial campaigns and bazaars and garage sales aimed at making temporary stewards out of us; instead of cajoling and harping and "bugging" people — we need to learn how to teach and preach the gospel and interpret the Christian life as stewardship. The world is crying out for keepers and tenders of its wonderful, frail beauty, and God desires to send us out as stewards into this astonishing and unique creation. Until we have been grasped by that word and deed of God; no amount of exhortation will alter greatly the image of the church or the course of the world.

Douglas John Hall
The Steward: A Biblical Symbol Come of Age

FOURTH
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Scripture
Luke 12: 22-34
I Timothy 6:6-19

"Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Luke 12:34

There is a wonderful television commercial that makes me laugh every time I see it. The late Jack Benny is being mugged. Benny, a great comedian of a generation ago, was known for his legendary tight-fistedness. Some of us can remember sitting by the radio on Sunday evening and laughing as Benny used, over and over, the running gag of his unwillingness to part with a penny ... the creaking doors on his money vault, his embarrassing, reluctant fumbling with his change purse to dig out a nickel. In the current television version, it's a rainy night, a mugger accosts Benny and says, "Your money or your life." There is an unexpected, pregnant pause. "I said, your money or your life," the impatient mugger barks. Benny replies: "I'm thinking it over".

There is truth as well as humor in that. I'm going to take a big risk this morning. I'm going to preach a sermon on the topic of money. I'm not going to disguise it. In a fine essay on the attitudes about money fostered by the church, Loren Mead, a thoughtful commentator on the contemporary religious scene, says that lay people are universally frustrated trying to "cut through the semantic fog about stewardship" they hear from the pulpit and read in their mail every autumn. So I promise not to use euphemisms and cliches. This is a sermon about money.

The risk, in telling you at the outset that the topic is money, is that you'll leave, or simply not listen. Jimmy Dean used to tell the wonderful story of the Tennessee mountain church whose most vocal member was an elderly woman who was in every way a saint — except for the fact that she enjoyed using a little snuff, a tobacco product, on occasion. On a Sunday morning a visiting preacher was railing against the sins of the flesh, and the woman was responding with her normal vigor. He turned to the evil of drink, and she became even more spirited in her "Amens" and "preach-it-brother's". And then he took up the topic of tobacco and the nasty habit some have of using snuff. The old woman said, loud enough for all to hear, "He just stopped preachin' and went to meddlin."

Money talk is personal. Meddling. I grew up in a household where there was no public talk about two subjects: sex and how much money people made, although the topic was an ever-present reality, lurking always just under the surface. The generation of people who grew up in the Depression never stopped worrying about having enough money, but what we had and what they had was nobody's business but ours and theirs. Social commentators note that money is the last bastion of privacy in America: that Americans will reveal everything about themselves, including their sexual behavior, before they will talk about how much money they have. Philosophy professor Jacob Needleman writes,

> "Time was in our society, when it was the clergyman, the physician, the psychiatrist who was most privy to people secret lives, their fears, desires, anxieties, their shames and misdeeds. But now this role is occupied more by the accountant and tax preparer." [*Money and the Meaning of Life*, p.104]

Money talk is personal. It is also about more than money. It is about heart and soul. It is about how we see ourselves and the purpose of our lives. It is about, above all else, values and priorities. Money, in fact, how we think about it, acquire, and use it, is very close to the essence of who we are. One could argue that to avoid the topic for whatever reason is not theologically and spiritually responsible.

The two texts we heard this morning are relevant and direct. In the first, Jesus is speaking about living life in harmony with God's grace and he says some very interesting things —

> "Don't worry — life is more than food, clothing"... he tells his friends. "God will provide what you need to live fully. Maybe not what you want, or think you want, but what you need. Stop striving so intensely for security — strive, instead, for God's kingdom. Open your hands; give." And then, the summation: "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

But money became more than that, almost immediately. Robert Wood Lynn, a fine theologian who used to work for the Lilly Endowment, has collaborated in a paper on the giving habits of American church people and observes:

> "Money has a particular power in American life. Lacking a landed gentry or titled aristocracy, the primary indicator of status in American life is the amount of money a person controls. Consequently, money has a symbolic place in our common life, that enables it to fulfill a significant number of non-economic functions."

Lynn points out,

> "Money is the way many middle-class Americans keep score in the various competitions such as career, that inform their daily life. For many contemporary Americans, money represents the self and its value." [*Unexplored Territory in Congregational Studies, Cultures of Giving*, Glenn T. Miller and Robert Wood Lynn]

Money is about value, the value we attribute to our own lives. The way to acquire money is to work hard and succeed. It has been a formula that has created the most phenomenal economy and nation in the history of the world, with enormous potential for doing good.

The shadow side is that because money is at the heart of our humanness, and because success produces money, success sometimes, oftentimes, in fact, takes on the characteristic of a spiritual quest. In fact, *Esquire* said just that in a cover article ten years ago:

> "Success — the religion of the 80's. Everyone pursues it. Only the most driven and talented achieves it. Few know how to live with it or without it." [February 1985]

But then in the 90's, the elevation of the traditional American work ethic into a holy crusade to succeed and acquire wealth began to show cracks in its shining veneer.

People not only got rich. They also got burned out. All at once everybody started discovering something Jesus and St. Paul understood 2,000 years ago, and that is that your heart goes where your treasure is. And it kept feeling, not like security, happiness, contentment, but ironically, a new kind of bondage, a new poverty, even. Jacob Needleman observed that people who had lot, more than they ever imagined owning weren't particularly happy. "We seem quite poor," he observed.

Russell Baker, *New York Times* columnist, in his memoir *Good Times*, describes reaching the top of his career as a journalist and still feeling, vaguely dissatisfied:

> "I felt that success ought to bring peace of mind, maturity, serenity ... The hunger for success was bred so deeply in (us) that we were powerless to stop chasing it long after we had achieved it." [*Good Times*, p.231]

And so a reaction has set in. Exactly ten years after the "Success is Religion" article, the May edition of Esquire featured an article "What Makes Sammy Run" that describes a significant turnaround in the culture's thinking about success and wealth. It begins with an account of a support group in Seattle to help people deal with addiction, not to alcohol, drugs, or sex, but to their jobs and their pursuit of success.

The article said that we are increasingly an exhausted and tired population. We have essentially destroyed any notion of leisure time. We work all the time and when we're not working, we're thinking about work. "The material progress that was supposed to free us has left us more enslaved ... For all the hype about going for the gold ... we're so weary at the end of the day that going for the sofa is as good as it gets."

That sounds like a lot of people I know. It sounds embarrassingly like the life we all live. Money talk is about heart and soul and values and priorities. "Your money or your life" ... "I'm thinking it over."

described in Robert Moats Miller's excellent biography

INVOLVING JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER, JR. AND HARRY EMERSON FOSDICK. ROCKEFELLER WAS THE WEALTHIEST PROTESTANT LAYPERSON IN THE COUNTRY. HE WAS A DEVOUT BAPTIST: HIS CONTRIBUTIONS ALONE CONSTITUTED 12% OF THE BUDGET OF THE NORTHERN BAPTIST DENOMINATION IN THE 1920s. BY 1960 HE HAD GIVEN AWAY $552 MILLION. HE WAS A LEADING LAYMAN AND CHAIRMAN OF THE PULPIT COMMITTEE OF PARK AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH IN NEW YORK.

ROCKEFELLER HAD A VISION OF THE CHURCH OF THE FUTURE - NON-SECTARIAN, RATIONAL, WORLD-EMBRACING. HE WANTED THE LEADING PREACHER OF THE DAY, HARRY EMERSON FOSDICK, TO BE THE PASTOR AND HE WANTED TO CONVINCE THE PARK AVENUE

BAPTISTS TO SELL THEIR NEW BUILDING AND JOIN HIM IN A NEW VENTURE ON RIVERSIDE DRIVE. FOSDICK, IN THE MEANTIME, WAS BEING THROWN OUT OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH FOR BEING TOO PROGRESSIVE. ROCKEFELLER WAS SUCCESSFUL ON ALL FRONTS. FOSDICK WAS CALLED. RIVERSIDE CHURCH WAS BUILT AND WAS, AND IS, AN EMBODIMENT OF ROCKEFELLER'S VISION. THE LEGENDARY INCIDENT OCCURRED IN THE EARLY STAGES OF NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE WEALTHY ROCKEFELLER AND THE PROGRESSIVE PREACHER. (THEY LATER BECAME DEAR AND LIFE-LONG FRIENDS.)* IN ROCKEFELLER'S OFFICE, FOSDICK WAS PROTESTING THAT "HE DID NOT WISH TO BE KNOWN AS THE PASTOR OF THE RICHEST MAN

(x) Fosdick had misgivings about R's wealth: knew his progressive friends wouldn't like it: sold out. protested to R that →

STRIVE, INSTEAD, FOR GOD'S KINGDOM. OPEN YOUR HANDS; GIVE." AND THEN, THE SUMMATION: "WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS, THERE YOUR HEART WILL BE ALSO."

DID YOU NOTICE THAT FAMOUS VERSE IS ACTUALLY INVERTED, THE OPPOSITE FROM THE WAY WE ORDINARILY HEAR IT AND REPEAT IT? IT IS NOT -- "WHERE YOUR HEART IS, THERE YOUR TREASURE WILL BE:" WHICH IS TO SAY -- YOUR HEART IS IN CHARGE OF STRATEGIC DECISIONS, YOUR BEHAVIOR WILL FALL IN LINE.

IS, IN A VERY REAL SENSE, THE REAL YOU.

JUST A FEW YEARS LATER, THE APOSTLE PAUL IS WRITING TO A YOUNG COLLEAGUE BY THE NAME OF TIMOTHY AND HE'S GIVING TIMOTHY SOME DOWN-TO-EARTH ADVICE, ABOUT REAL LIFE AND REAL PEOPLE MIXED IN WITH SOME GLORIOUS THEOLOGY.

"WE BROUGHT NOTHING INTO THIS WORLD -- WE WILL TAKE NOTHING OUT WITH US" PAUL TELLS HIS YOUNG APPRENTICE. NOBODY ARGUES WITH THAT, ALTHOUGH THE NOTION HAS NOT ALTOGETHER DISAPPEARED. IN PAUL'S DAY MANY PEOPLE AND MANY RELIGIONS ASSUMED THAT YOUR EARTHLY

ACQUISITIONS WOULD BE USEFUL AFTER DEATH. ANCIENT TOMBS HOLD TREASURES, JEWELS, MONEY, CLOTHING, WEAPONS, FOOD FOR THE JOURNEY. I KNOW PEOPLE WHO ACT LIKE THEY STILL BELIEVE IT. I KNOW PEOPLE WHO REFUSE TO LIVE IN THE PRESENT, OUT OF AN OBSESSION TO MAKE THE FUTURE SECURE. I KNOW PEOPLE WHO DENY THEMSELVES HEALTH CARE, AND BASIC LIFE NEEDS RATHER THAN TAP THEIR SAVINGS.

TWO ELDERLY MEN IN BUSINESS SUITS ARE STANDING, LOOKING AT A TOMBSTONE BEARING THE NAME OF THEIR BUSINESS PARTNER. "HOW MUCH DID HE LEAVE?" ONE ASKS. "ALL OF IT", THE OTHER RESPONDS.

THOSE WHO WANT TO BE RICH FALL INTO TEMPTATION. PAUL GOES ON .. "THE LOVE OF MONEY IS THE ROOT OF ALL KINDS OF EVIL."

NOTE 2- THERE IS A DISCIPLINED SENSE OF BALANCE. IN PAUL'S TIME, AND IN OURS, THERE ARE MANY WHO CONCLUDE THAT WEALTH, MONEY ITSELF, IS EVIL: THAT POVERTY IS ETHICALLY AND MORALLY BETTER. PAUL DIDN'T SAY THAT. PAUL DOES NOT CONDEMN MONEY, WEALTH, PER SE. NEITHER DID JESUS, FOR THAT MATTER. IT IS THE LOVE OF MONEY; THE VALUE, THE INTENT, THE AFFECTION OF THE HEART WHICH IS THE SOURCE OF TROUBLE.

AND THEN, AFTER AN INSPIRING CHALLENGE TO TIMOTHY TO FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT, AND A GLORIOUS DOXOLOGY TO JESUS CHRIST, PAUL COMES BACK AGAIN TO SOME PRACTICAL ADVICE TO WHOSE WHO HAVE MONEY.

> "AS FOR THOSE WHO ARE RICH -- DO GOOD, BE RICH IN GOOD WORKS, BE GENEROUS, READY TO SHARE ... SO THAT THEY MAY TAKE HOLD OF THE LIFE THAT IS REALLY LIFE."

OF LIFE. THIS IS SOMETHING NEW." [P.2]

THE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHER MAX WEBER SAID IT WAS JOHN CALVIN, THE FATHER OF PRESBYTERIANISM, WHO FOREVER CHANGED THE WAY WESTERN CIVILIZATION THINKS ABOUT WEALTH. AT THE END OF THE MIDDLE AGES, A TIME WHEN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE WAS SEEN IN TERMS OF WITHDRAWING FROM THE WORLD TO A MONASTERY AND GOD'S KINGDOM WAS A SPIRITUAL STATE UTTERLY DIFFERENT FROM LIFE IN THIS WORLD, IT WAS JOHN CALVIN WHO RE-FOCUSED THE ENERGY OF CHRISTIAN FAITH ON THIS WORLD: THE CITY, HUMAN POLITICS, INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE. "PROTESTANTISM SANCTIFIED LIFE IN THE

MILLER AND ROBERT

WOOD LYNN]

MONEY IS ABOUT VALUE, THE VALUE WE ATTRIBUTE TO OUR OWN LIVES. THE WAY TO ACQUIRE MONEY IS TO WORK HARD AND SUCCEED. IT HAS BEEN A FORMULA THAT HAS CREATED THE MOST PHENOMENAL ECONOMY AND NATION IN THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD, WITH ENORMOUS POTENTIAL FOR DOING GOOD.

THE SHADOW SIDE IS THAT BECAUSE MONEY IS AT THE HEART OF OUR HUMANNESS, AND BECAUSE SUCCESS PRODUCES MONEY, SUCCESS SOMETIMES, OFTENTIMES, IN FACT, TAKES ON THE CHARACTERISTIC OF A SPIRITUAL QUEST. IN FACT, ESQUIRE SAID

JUST THAT IN A COVER ARTICLE TEN YEARS AGO:

> "SUCCESS -- THE RELIGION OF THE 80'S. EVERYONE PURSUES IT. ONLY THE MOST DRIVEN AND TALENTED ACHIEVES IT. FEW KNOW HOW TO LIVE WITH IT OR WITHOUT IT."
>
> [FEBRUARY 1985]

BUT THEN IN THE 90'S, THE ELEVATION OF THE TRADITIONAL AMERICAN WORK ETHIC INTO A HOLY CRUSADE TO SUCCEED AND

"right sizing"

Corporate Downsizing was part of it. thousands of middle mgmt jobs. eliminated - a reality of a market economy. each a personal story..

50-55 - good job. sometime generous buyout. & isn't the problem - it's value

ACQUIRE WEALTH BEGAN TO SHOW CRACKS IN ITS SHINING VENEER.

PEOPLE NOT ONLY GOT RICH. THEY ALSO GOT BURNED OUT. ALL AT ONCE EVERYBODY STARTED DISCOVERING SOMETHING JESUS AND ST. PAUL UNDERSTOOD 2,000 YEARS AGO, AND THAT IS THAT YOUR HEART GOES WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS. AND IT KEPT FEELING, NOT LIKE SECURITY, HAPPINESS, CONTENTMENT, BUT IRONICALLY, A NEW KIND OF BONDAGE, A NEW POVERTY, EVEN. JACOB NEEDLEMAN OBSERVED THAT PEOPLE WHO HAD LOT, MORE THAN THEY EVER IMAGINED OWNING WEREN'T PARTICULARLY HAPPY. "WE SEEM QUITE POOR," HE OBSERVED.

new Magazine Plain - on virtues of simple life like Amish great success

RUSSELL BAKER, NEW YORK TIMES COLUMNIST, IN HIS MEMOIR GOOD TIMES, DESCRIBES REACHING THE TOP OF HIS CAREER AS A JOURNALIST AND STILL FEELING, VAGUELY DISSATISFIED:

> "I FELT THAT SUCCESS OUGHT TO BRING PEACE OF MIND, MATURITY, SERENITY ... THE HUNGER FOR SUCCESS WAS BRED SO DEEPLY IN (US) THAT WE WERE POWERLESS TO STOP CHASING IT LONG AFTER WE HAD

ACHIEVED IT." [GOOD TIMES, P.231]

AND SO A REACTION HAS SET IN. EXACTLY TEN YEARS AFTER THE "SUCCESS IS RELIGION" ARTICLE, THE MAY EDITION OF ESQUIRE FEATURED AN ARTICLE "WHAT MAKES SAMMY RUN" THAT DESCRIBES A SIGNIFICANT TURNAROUND IN THE CULTURE'S THINKING ABOUT SUCCESS AND WEALTH. IT BEGINS WITH AN ACCOUNT OF A SUPPORT GROUP IN SEATTLE TO HELP PEOPLE DEAL WITH ADDICTION, NOT TO ALCOHOL, DRUGS, OR SEX, BUT TO THEIR JOBS AND THEIR PURSUIT OF SUCCESS.

THE ARTICLE SAID THAT WE ARE INCREASINGLY AN EXHAUSTED AND TIRED POPULATION. WE HAVE ESSENTIALLY DESTROYED ANY NOTION OF LEISURE TIME. WE WORK ALL THE TIME AND WHEN WE'RE NOT WORKING, WE'RE THINKING ABOUT WORK. "THE MATERIAL PROGRESS THAT WAS SUPPOSED TO FREE US HAS LEFT US MORE ENSLAVED ... FOR ALL THE HYPE ABOUT GOING FOR THE GOLD ... WE'RE SO WEARY AT THE END OF THE DAY THAT GOING FOR THE SOFA IS AS GOOD AS IT GETS."

- Amish Journal Plain

THAT SOUNDS LIKE A LOT OF PEOPLE I KNOW. IT SOUNDS EMBARRASSINGLY LIKE THE LIFE WE ALL LIVE. MONEY TALK IS ABOUT HEART AND SOUL AND VALUES AND

clergy laity